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Common items for each session: monitoring, assessment and reporting

A format for voluntary reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests at its third session

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In response to decision 2/1 of the United Nations Forum on Forests, its secretariat developed a suggested format to serve as a basis for countries to use in reporting to the Forum at its third session on their implementation of the relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action. The Forum may wish to consider whether the approach used for the suggested format is useful and also suitable for future sessions.

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1. In its decision 2/1, the United Nations Forum on Forests requested its secretariat to develop a suggested format to serve as a basis for countries to use in reporting to the Forum at its third session on their implementation of the relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action.

2. The secretariat of the Forum, in collaboration with the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, has prepared a suggested format and accompanying guidelines for reporting (see annexes I and II). In preparing the format for voluntary national reports, the secretariat drew upon the experience and lessons learned from other processes, such as national reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development. It attempted to develop a simple and streamlined format that provided countries with both a useful structure and sufficient flexibility.

3. In November 2002, the format was sent to all permanent missions to the United Nations, for forwarding to the appropriate in-country office. At the same time, copies of the letter, format and guidelines were sent to all the Forum national focal points that had been officially designated to date.

4. The format requested information on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action on the elements under discussion at the third session of the Forum, namely: (a) economic aspects of forests, (b) forest health and productivity, and (c) maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs.

5. As of 20 February 2003, 21 countries had submitted reports, which provided useful information for the preparation of the Secretary-General's reports on the three elements mentioned above.

6. A country-led initiative in support of the Forum, on the theme "Monitoring, assessment and reporting on lessons learned in the assessment of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action", was held from 17 to 20 March 2003 in Viterbo, Italy. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Italy, co-sponsored by the Governments of Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Forum secretariat. A report on the initiative will be before the Forum.

7. At its first session, the Forum stressed the importance of using regional and national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as a basis for reporting on sustainable forest management. To that end, the International Conference on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management: The Way Forward was convened in Guatemala City from 3 to 7 February 2003.

Points for discussion

8. The Forum may wish to consider whether the approach used for the suggested format for voluntary reporting for the third session is useful and also suitable for future sessions.

9. The Forum may also wish to consider the format in the context of the proposed establishment of an ad hoc expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting and the outcome of the two related meetings mentioned in paragraphs 6 and 7 above.

Annex I

Guidelines for the preparation of voluntary national reports to the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its third session[a]

1. Introduction

1. The present guidelines, which were prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, are intended to provide guidance to States Members of the United Nations on the preparation of their national reports for the third session of the Forum, in response to decision 2/1 of the Forum, in which it requested its secretariat, in order to assist countries in preparing their voluntary reports, to develop a suggested format to serve as a basis for countries to use and report on their implementation of the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action at its third session.

2. Background of national reporting to the Forum

2. When the Economic and Social Council established the Forum in October 2000, it identified monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress as one of the principal functions of the Forum (see Council resolution 2000/35, para. 2 (e)).

3. At its first session, the Forum adopted several resolutions[b] that provided guidance on country reporting. The principles, reflected in the various related resolutions, are brought together in resolution 1/2, annex, paragraph 23, which reads:

> "Voluntary reporting by countries, regions, organizations and processes on their implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action should include achievements and identify gaps and obstacles to implementation, inter alia, on means of implementation. The reports may be prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Such voluntary reports would start at the second session of the Forum."

4. Although countries agreed at its first session to report to the Forum at its second session, no decision was adopted regarding the preparation of guidelines or a format for national reports. Consequently, the national reports submitted varied in content, structure and length.

5. Subsequently, at its second session, the Forum requested its secretariat to develop a suggested reporting format to facilitate national reporting at the third session. The suggested format is contained in annex II.

3. Purpose and use of reports

6. The primary purpose of the national reports is to provide a useful planning tool for countries. The reporting process is intended to help countries assess their progress in implementing relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action, analyse lessons learned, and identify gaps and obstacles that countries may wish to address. The process of preparing the reports can catalyse enhanced cooperation and coordination on forests among government agencies and other stakeholders in the country.

7. The reports will be made available to the focal agencies of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests which are preparing the Secretary-General's reports for the third session of the Forum. The national reports and corresponding Secretary-

General's reports will provide an overview of countries' achievements, identify commonly experienced obstacles to implementation and approaches to overcoming them, and help countries to identify key issues for discussion in the Forum and subsequent international action.

4. Contribution of reports to the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

8. The national reports will play the following two fundamental roles in the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, which will be carried out in 2005 on the basis of the criteria adopted at the second session of the Forum:[c]

- The reports will provide information for the assessment of countries' progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action (criterion a(i)) as well as of the extent to which partnerships relevant to implementation have been advanced (criterion c(i)).
- Among the criteria for the review of the effectiveness are those related to the reporting process itself, including the extent to which countries respond to the call to submit voluntary reports (criterion e(i)); the extent to which trends, lessons learned and emerging issues are identified by the reports (criterion e(ii)); and the extent to which the participation of major groups[d] in developing voluntary reports was encouraged (criterion e(iii)).

5. Preparation of reports

9. The Forum's recognition of the importance of enhancing stakeholder participation in the preparation of national reports to it is reflected in both Forum resolution 1/2, annex, paragraph 23 (see above) and criterion e(iii) for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. Accordingly, countries are encouraged to involve a range of relevant government agencies and major groups in the preparation of their voluntary national reports, and to provide related information in the reports.

6. Approach, content and format of reports

Approach

10. In developing the reporting format, the Forum secretariat took into consideration the experience of countries in reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development. Specifically, it considered the findings and recommendations of the meeting of the national focal points on improving future national reporting to the Commission, held in New York, on 12 and 13 February 2002.[e] Among other things, the meeting called for guidelines that are flexible so as to allow countries to express specific national interests and concerns but within a standardized format; that are simple and streamlined (i.e., with fewer but more clustered questions); that include national impact analysis rather than just accomplishments alone; and that ask for forward-looking views on various actions needed to be undertaken at various levels.

Content

11. The suggested format for the report is provided in annex II. Countries are invited to provide information on the following: section I, key contacts in the forest sector in the country; section II, progress and issues related to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action; and section III, preparation of the report.

12. The first point in section II addresses general information on progress in evaluating (or assessing) the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context, progress in the national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests, and stakeholder participation. Many countries have already reported on those activities in chapter 11 (combating deforestation) of their country profiles (on national implementation of Agenda 21), which were submitted to the Commission in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.[f] Sensitive to the need to reduce reporting burden and streamline reporting requirements, the Forum secretariat suggests that countries simply update that information, where applicable. A copy of the CD-ROM containing all country profiles is included, along with a hard copy of the country's report on forests, if submitted.

13. The other points in section II focus on progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the three substantive issues (or elements) to be addressed at the third session of the Forum: (i) economic aspects of forests; (ii) forest health and productivity; and (iii) maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs. Countries are invited to provide information on their recent (i.e., since the establishment of IPF in 1995) experience in implementing related proposals for action as input for discussions under agenda items 3 and 4 of the third session of the Forum. Countries are also invited to provide information on means of implementation (i.e., finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building for sustainable forest management) and some of the common items of the Forum in the context of the three substantive issues.

14. If a country does not have information on a certain point or that point is not relevant in the national context, the report may simply state "no information available" or "not applicable", as appropriate. If the information is available in another report or document, the country may choose to extract the relevant information and include it in the national report to the Forum or provide the reference or document itself, with an indication of the relevant section, to the Forum secretariat.

Length, language and format

15. The length of the reports will vary from country to country. Countries are encouraged to be as concise as possible, however, with a view to providing a report of a total length of 10 to 20 pages.

16. As for Commission reporting, and in the light of time constraints and financial limitations, countries are requested to provide their reports in English, Spanish or French. It is hoped that the other official languages of the United Nations may be accommodated in the future.

17. Countries are requested to submit their national report in electronic form (in MS Word format), if possible, and are asked to specify the software used if it is other than Microsoft 2000. Consistent formatting of all reports would facilitate their use, t[illegible]s the following specifications are suggested: font in Times New Roman,

size 11; margins of 1 inch or 2.5 centimetres on the sides, top and bottom; and simple text without tabs or line breaks.

7. Submission of reports

18. The Forum secretariat requests that national reports be submitted by 22 December 2002, preferably in electronic form (by e-mail or by sending a diskette), as well as in hard copy. The report may be submitted to:

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Coordinator and Head, Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests
Two United Nations Plaza, Room DC2-2286
New York, N.Y. 10017
United States of America
Tel: (212) 963-3401
Fax: (917) 367-3186
E-mail: Patosaari@un.org

8. Dissemination of national reports

19. To make the reports accessible, the Forum secretariat will post them on the Forum web site at http://www.unff.org.

Notes

[a] The Forum secretariat is transmitting the guidelines, as well as the suggested format contained in annex II, to all the permanent missions to the United Nations, and is making it available on the Forum web site at http://www.unff.org.

[b] See, in particular, Forum resolutions 1/1, paras. 14 and 15, and 1/2, annex, paras. 9 and 23.

[c] See Forum resolution 2/3 for the list of criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

[d] The nine major groups specified in Agenda 21 include: women; children and youth; indigenous people; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; the scientific and technological community; and farmers.

[e] The results of the meeting are reported in a note by the Secretary-General (A/CONF.199/PC/4), available at http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/wssd/aconf199_pc4.pdf, and in the document "Country experiences with national reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development", Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development, New York, August 2002.

[f] Reports on forests to the Commission include information on administrative structure, legislation and regulation, policies and plans, major group involvement, programmes and projects, capacity-building, information, research and technologies, financing and cooperation. The country profiles are available on the Commission web site at http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/cp2002.htm.

Annex II

Proposed format for voluntary national reports

National Report to the Third Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Insert **Name of country**

Insert **Date**

I. Key Contacts

Head of Forestry in [insert name of the country]:

Name: [insert name of the person responsible for forests in the country]

Title: [insert title of the person]

Contact information:
Address: [insert information]
Phone: [insert information]
Fax: [insert information]
E-mail: [insert information]

UNFF national focal point for [insert name of the country]:

Name: [insert name of the UNFF focal point for the country, if already designated]

Title: [insert title of the UNFF focal point for the country]

Contact information:
Address: [insert information]
Phone: [insert information]
Fax: [insert information]
E-mail: [insert information]

Person to contact concerning the national report, if other than the UNFF national focal point:

Name: [insert name of the contact person]

Title: [insert title of the contact person]

Contact information:
Address: [insert information]
Phone: [insert information]
Fax: [insert information]
E-mail: [insert information]

II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

General

1. Please provide additional or new information on initiatives taken or lessons learned further to the information on forests included in your national reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development[a] on the following points:

- assessment (including of the relevance, priority, status of implementation, planned actions) of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the national context
- development and implementation of your national forest programme or similar national policy framework for forests, and
- mechanisms or initiatives to facilitate stakeholder participation in forest sector planning, decision-making and/or forest management.

Economic aspects of forests, including trade

2. Please provide information on: i) activities undertaken in your country, ii) progress made, iii) lessons learned, iv) constraints encountered (including those related to financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and needs for capacity-building) and v) initiatives planned and vi) the role of enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination to facilitate progress in:

- valuation of forest goods and services (this may include, among other things, the development and use of new valuation methodologies, valuation of a wider range of goods and services, and policy decisions that reflect a more comprehensive assessment of forest values)
- the amount, scope, or quality of market data and information for wood and non-wood forest products and their substitutes
- use of economic and policy instruments to facilitate progress toward sustainable forest management (these may include improved tax policies and forest revenue collection systems).

3. Please provide information on i) initiatives taken, ii) progress made, iii) lessons learned, iv) constraints encountered (including those related to financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and needs for capacity-building) and v) initiatives planned, and vi) the role of enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination to facilitate progress related to trade in forest products or environmental services (e.g. carbon trading), including in:

- efforts to reduce negative impacts of trade,
- participation in forest certification and labeling schemes and work toward mutual recognition and comparability of such schemes, and
- efforts to reduce illegal trade (exports from or imports into your country) in wood or non-wood forest products. Please indicate achievements made, lessons learned, constraints encountered, and planned initiatives.

Forest health and productivity

4. If damage to forests from air pollution is a significant problem in your country, please provide information on recent national strategies or programmes to minimize damaging air pollution. Please indicate if your country is involved in any international cooperation efforts aimed at strengthening scientific knowledge, increasing information access or reducing the impacts of long-range air pollution on forests, as well as your views on the role of enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels to facilitate such work.

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[a] For further explanation, please refer to "content" in section 6 of the "Guidelines for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reports to the Third Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests", attached above. The most recent information on forests submitted to the CSD by most countries is in their "Country Profile". The text, on CD Rom and in hard copy, has been distributed along with these guidelines to each country.

Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

5. Please indicate progress made and lessons learned in efforts to harmonize or to make compatible policy frameworks in your country (e.g. national forest programme or a similar policy framework for forests, biodiversity strategies and action plans, national action plans to combat desertification, etc.) that collectively address the full range of forest values.

6. Please provide information on recent efforts to assess long-term trends in national supply and demand for wood, non-wood forest products and services and whether your country's national forest programme or similar policy framework for forests takes into consideration future needs for forest goods and services. Please provide views on how enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels, including through UNFF, could further facilitate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

Other information and emerging issues

7. Please provide any additional relevant information on the implementation of proposals for action or emerging issues[b] related to: i) economic aspects of forests, ii) forest health and productivity, or iii) maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs.

III. Preparation of the Report

8. Describe the process of preparing this report, including which government agencies and stakeholder groups were involved, and the extent to which they contributed. Provide information on challenges encountered and lessons learned in the preparation of this report.

[b] "Emerging issues" refer to issues that have not been addressed by UNFF but that are related to UNFF "elements". For example, some countries may consider forest fires and forest pests and diseases as important emerging issues for the UNFF to address under the UNFF element, forest health and productivity. Kindly limit the emerging issues to three per UNFF element addressed by this report.

Annex 1 (of proposed format for voluntary national reports to UNFF 3)

Indicative summary of IPF/IFF proposals for action relevant to each of the three substantive issues on the agenda of the third session of UNFF

This summary of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to economic aspects of forests, forest health and productivity, and maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs builds upon work initiated by the Program on Forests (PROFOR) at the World Bank and the Government of Australia. The summary of actions is provided for illustrative purposes only. Countries are urged to refer to the full text of the proposals for action as provided in the reports of IPF 4 (E/CN.17/1997/12) and IFF 4 (E/CN.17/2000/14).

UNFF 3 substantive issue	Type of action called for	IPF Proposal(s) for action	IFF Proposal(s) for action
Economic aspects of forests	Valuation of forest goods and services	58h, 104a, 104b	107a, 107b, 107c, 107d
	Data and information on prices and markets for forest products		41e, 121d, 122e
	Full-cost internalization of wood and non-wood forest products and services	58b(iv), 134a, 134b	41c, 41d, 64h, 122f
	Development and use of economic and policy instruments and forest revenue collection systems to increase rent capture and promote sustainable forest management	70b	115a, 115b, 115c, 115d, 115e, 115f, 115g, 122b, 122d
	Market and trade on forest products	128a, 128b, 128c, 131a, 131b, 132a, 132b, 133a, 133b, 133c, 133d, 133e, 133f, 133g, 135a, 135b	41a, 41b, 41e, 41f, 41g, 64i

UNFF 3 substantive issue	Type of action called for	IPF Proposal(s) for action	IFF Proposal(s) for action
Forest health and productivity	Adopt a preventative approach to the reduction of damaging air pollution	IPF 50a	
	Strengthen international cooperation in strengthening related scientific knowledge and information access and in reducing long-range air pollution	IPF 50b, IPF 50e	
	Develop national and regional programmes for monitoring air pollution and provide factual information about transboundary air pollution	IPF 27c, IPF 50c, IPF 50d	
Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs	Assess and meet long-term trends in supply and demand for wood through sustainable forest management policies within and between the public and private sectors (including Incorporate supply of fuelwood and wood energy as well as efficient wood energy technologies in policy development)	28 (a) 58b (i)	122 (a) 122 (b) 122 (d) 122 (c)
	Develop and implement strategies for the protection of the full range of forest values, including cultural, social, spiritual, environmental and economic aspects; particularly biological diversity, indigenous needs and planning and management on an ecosystem basis		85 (b)
	Improve data collection and information dissemination on forest resources, both wood and non-wood forest products and services		121 (b) 121 (c)